

# Repairs Matter

The newsletter from the Guinness Trust Repairs Desk

## Digital TV is coming to a communal aerial near you!

The digital TV switch-over is coming. See pages 4 and 5 for more details of this exciting new project!



### In this issue:

<b>Editor's Welcome</b>	Page 2
<b>Don't leave me hanging on</b>	Page 2
<b>Gas safety</b>	Page 3
<b>Digital TV</b>	Page 4
<b>Fire safety</b>	Page 6
<b>Winter working – how did we do?</b>	Page 8

## Our survey said....

Provisional results from our survey found that the overwhelming response from the 400 residents surveyed was that they were happy with the Repairs Desk opening hours. Further analysis is ongoing and we will report in more detail in the Summer edition.



Guinness Trust Repairs Desk

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**Gas Leaks** Call National Gas Emergency Service for free on **0800 111 999**

# Editor's welcome

Welcome to the Spring Edition of Repairs Matter, brought to you yet again with the approval of our remote editors. Hopefully, by the time you read this the snow will be long forgotten and the spring bulbs making an entrance. However, at the Repairs Desk, we have had a careful look at how we coped with the harsh winter and have found the extra hours we opened made a real difference to our customers (see page 8).

A theme running through this issue is health and safety in your home. We have lots

of features to help you keep safe and, in particular, are focusing on gas (page 3) and fire safety (page 6). Excitingly digital TV is coming to a communal aerial near you. Please see page 4 for details of this 18 month long project which is soon to start!

Finally, we have a smart new look, we hope you like it. Do let us know what you think by emailing us at [gtrepairs@guinness.org.uk](mailto:gtrepairs@guinness.org.uk). We value your feedback.

## Don't leave me hanging on...

Although the average wait to talk to a Repairs Desk team member is only 20 seconds, at certain times of the day you can wait for much longer. We want to reduce our waiting times and improve our service to you. We have found that our phones are busiest on Monday and Friday and early in the morning, so at these times you may find you have to wait longer.

We are investigating what we can do to reduce your wait, but you can help us by: -

■ **Emailing non emergency repairs** to us for free on [gtrepairs@guinness.org.uk](mailto:gtrepairs@guinness.org.uk) – you will get an automatic reply to reassure you that we have received your email. We will respond to you in full within two working days.

■ **Using our website** [www.guinnesspartnership.com](http://www.guinnesspartnership.com) to report non emergency repairs. Again, it's free and you will get an autoreply immediately and a full reply within two working days.

■ **Leaving us a voicemail message** when prompted; we really will call you back within one working day, although it will often be much sooner!

■ **If your repair is a routine repair, reporting it on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.** Whatever the repair, try to call us in the afternoon rather than first thing in the morning and, if you can, avoid calling on Monday morning!



**Remember, the Repairs Desk has a single number now  
08452 30 30 80!**

# Gas Safety – it's important to us and you

## What does the law say?

Richard Hall, East Area Maintenance Manager, confirms that we have a legal obligation to ensure that the gas appliances we provide in your home are working safely. This means that all gas appliances that we provide you with must be checked at least once every 12 months by a suitably qualified engineer. This is even the case where the gas has been disconnected or capped off. The engineer must come into your home to carry out this check and our contractors will contact you directly to make an appointment. Please ensure that you work with us to make these arrangements so we can keep your gas check up to date.

## What if I don't allow access?

We are still legally responsible even if you refuse to let us into your home. This is because these checks are vital for the safety of your neighbours as well as you. This explains why we work very hard to obtain access and ultimately, if we cannot get access, we will go to court for an order requiring you to give us access.

## Who does the check and what do they look at?

We only use Gas Safe qualified engineers to carry out these checks. When at your property they will check your appliances are working correctly and that the pipes are not leaking. They will also check for carbon monoxide.

## Do I get a record of the check?

The engineer will record their visit. You will have been given a copy of the current certificate for your home when you moved in

and will receive a copy of the new one every year – keep it safe!

## What about gas appliances that are not owned by Guinness Trust?

Many of our customers have installed their own gas appliances – typically cookers. During the check the engineer will look at these appliances. If these are found to be dangerous the engineer has a legal obligation to turn the appliance off, issue you with a warning certificate and inform us as the landlord. It is then your responsibility to have the appliance replaced or repaired, although this must be done by an engineer who is Gas Safe registered. See [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk) or phone 0800 408 5500 for details of engineers in your area.

## Can I tell you what I think of my annual gas check?

Yes! In order to try and improve the service we provide, we have recently introduced a satisfaction survey regarding the gas safety check and service visit. The early results indicate that 90% of you are satisfied or very satisfied with the overall experience. Although this is encouraging we are actively exploring ways to increase this to 100%! Do please return your satisfaction questionnaire and give us your views – we want to hear from you.



# Do you watch TV via a communal aerial?

If so this article contains important information for you!



## Guinness Trust Launches Integrated Reception System (Digital TV) Upgrade

We are sure you will have heard, through the press or on TV, that traditional TV signals (often called “analogue TV”) will stop being transmitted in this country by 2012. They will be replaced with digital transmission giving access to freeview channels. This will mean that our existing communal aerials will no longer work.

## What do Guinness Trust have to do?

To ensure that you can continue to enjoy your TV, we need to replace the old communal aerials which are in place at most of our flats and some of our houses.

## What if I don't have a communal aerial?

You must update your own equipment. You will need to ensure your TV and radio can receive a digital signal. For more details see [www.digitaluk.co.uk](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk) or call 08456 50 50 50.

## What system are Guinness Trust going to install?

We are going to install the most commonly used new Digital Communal TV system called an "Integrated Reception System" (IRS). We have chosen this because it will give you the widest possible freeview and subscription viewing options via satellite and terrestrial TV. This will include (subject to payment of subscription) Sky / Sky Plus and a large range of overseas TV channels.

The IRS system is also a good choice because it will receive both the old analogue and the new digital TV and radio until the analogue system is switched off.

## When will you be changing my communal aerial?

We don't know yet. The change over will be phased by area to coincide with the switch off of the analogue signal. We will be upgrading the communal aerial on 7,188 properties and are currently working on the schedule for these works. Once available, details will be posted on our website and you will be contacted directly.

**You do not need to worry or do anything further at this time – when we are going to change your communal aerial we will contact you. In the meanwhile, you can continue to enjoy TV and radio as normal.**

## Will I have to pay anything?

It's included as part of your service charge.

## Do you have to access my property to carry out the works?

Yes. While most of the works take place within the communal areas, the engineers will need access to your premises for approximately 30 minutes. It is only during this time that your TV reception may be disrupted.

## What happens next?

Look out for the digital TV pack containing introduction letters and explanatory booklets that will be dropping through your letter-box very soon. Please do ensure you attend the open forum meeting being held in your area (check your mail for the dates and times) so you have a chance to discuss this fantastic project with us and the engineers who will install the IRS system on our behalf.

We are sure you will find this to be a very welcome improvement to the service we currently provide. If you have any queries, please do come along to your local meeting to discuss them with us.



Paul Taylor is leading this project and can be contacted on 01245 228236 or email [digitaltv@guinness.com](mailto:digitaltv@guinness.com) or see our website.



# Be safe at home...

In the Summer Edition of Repairs Matter, we focused on being safe when letting contractors and others into your home. However, even inside your home, there can be hazards which can pose a serious risk to your health. A key issue is fire safety which, as we have seen lately in the press, if not taken seriously can have tragic consequences.

## Here is some good advice as to how to be as safe as you can:

- 🔥 Fit a smoke alarm on every level of your home. Test the batteries every week and change them every year – never remove them without replacing them immediately.
- 🔥 Take care when cooking, especially with hot oil.
- 🔥 Plan your escape route and make sure everyone in the property knows it.
- 🔥 Check for fire hazards in your home before you go to bed.
- 🔥 Don't overload electrical sockets or use damaged electrical appliances.
- 🔥 Use candles and portable heaters carefully – check they are out/off when you leave the room or go to bed and do not use near curtains or soft furnishings.
- 🔥 More people die in fires caused by smoking than in fires caused by anything else – put cigarettes out, right out.
- 🔥 If there is a fire don't tackle it yourself – get out and stay out and call 999.



## Fire Safety in Flats... some extra advice



Your flat has been designed and built with fire safety in mind. The walls, doors and floors are designed to resist fire and prevent the spread of smoke. As well as the general fire safety tips above to ensure the safety of you and your neighbours, you should also:

- 🔥 Never hold, prop or wedge fire doors open and never remove self-closing devices fitted to your front door or internal doors;
- 🔥 Close all internal doors in your flat at night when you go to bed;
- 🔥 Keep the communal areas around your flat, such as the corridors and staircases clear of any obstacles eg furniture, bicycles, furniture, and rubbish. Our Housing Officers monitor this carefully and regularly ask for items to be removed from communal areas – please help them keep these areas clear;
- 🔥 Keep keys to windows and doors close to the window or door, so everyone can find them if it is dark or there is smoke; and
- 🔥 Unplug all electrical appliances not designed to stay on for long periods.

### If there is a fire in your flat:

- 🔥 Alert everyone in the flat and leave the flat (without stopping to collect pets or belongings), closing the front door behind you;
- 🔥 Leave the building (without using the lift) by the nearest safe exit and call the Fire Brigade by dialling 999; and
- 🔥 Do not re-enter the building until you have been told it is safe to do so.

### If there is a fire in another flat or in any communal area:

- 🔥 Alert everyone in the flat;
- 🔥 If it is safe to do so, leave the flat (without stopping to collect pets or belongings), closing the front door behind you. Leave the building (without using the lift) by the nearest safe exit and call the Fire Brigade by dialling 999;
- 🔥 If it is not safe to leave (perhaps because the fire is in the common parts) stay in your flat and call the Fire Brigade by dialling 999; open a window for fresh air; stay by the window where you can be seen and place damp towels or bedding around the doorframes to prevent smoke entering the room.

If you have any queries, please contact your Housing Officer or, for more advice, go to [www.firekills.gov.uk](http://www.firekills.gov.uk)






# Winter 09/10:

## How did we cope?

This winter has been the coldest for 27 years and has proved as challenging for the Repairs Desk as everyone else. However, we worked hard and introduced a number of measures to try to improve the service we provided to you, our customers:

**Extended Christmas Opening Hours:** this year for the very first time, the Repairs Desk opened between Christmas and the New Year. This proved a great success. We handled 906 calls, raised 399 orders for repairs and dealt with 145 emails. Previously, all except emergency works orders would have had to wait until we reopened in the New Year!

**Weekend Working:** during the worst of the snows in January our out of hours service was inundated with calls from customers of other housing associations that, unlike us, were unable to open at all. We were so concerned that you would have difficulty reporting repairs at the weekend that the Repairs Desk team battled through the snow and ice to open the Repairs Desk for three weekends to take your emergency calls.



Over these weekends we handled over 450 calls and our average waiting time to get through to the desk was just 18 seconds! However, some of our customers were dialling the old out of hours number and so going directly to our out of hours provider – remember, please use our new single number 08452 30 30 80. That way, if the Repairs Desk are offering additional services you will benefit from them!

**An apology:** finally, for those customers who, despite our best efforts outlined above, encountered long waits to report a repair or delays in our contractors actually getting to them because of the poor weather conditions, please accept our sincere apologies and assurance that we will try to learn as much as we can from this in order to improve our winter service next year.



**We are able to get any document translated into or produced in Braille, audio, large print or into other languages.**

**Contact us for more details on 08452 30 30 80**

## What repairs am I responsible for?

You are responsible for minor repairs and maintenance. These are jobs that you can reasonably carry out using minor hand tools; for example clearing blocked sinks and toilets, arranging for the plumbing in of your own washing machine, refixing toilet seats and putting up curtain rails.

You are also responsible for any repairs needed because of damage, misuse or carelessness by you or your visitors.

This does not apply to Shared Ownership properties where the responsibilities are described in the lease.

